

VINDICATION 2

OF THE

Cause of the Catholics of Ireland,

ADOPTED,

And ordered to be published by

THE GENERAL COMMITTEE,

AT

A MEETING HELD AT TAYLOR'S-HALL, BACK-LANE,

DECEMBER 7, 1792.

To which is subjoined,

THE DECLARATION

SUBSCRIBED BY THE CATHOLICS OF IRELAND :

ALSO THE

LETTER AND PLAN OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE

FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF DELEGATES.

D U B L I N :

Printed by Appointment,

BY H. FITZPATRICK, 2, UPPER ORMOND-QUAY.

1793.



VINDICATION

OF

The Cause of the Catholics of Ireland.

THE GENERAL COMMITTEE of the CATHOLICS of IRELAND, finding, with the deepest concern, that their Principles and Conduct have been misunderstood and misrepresented in a variety of late Publications, and fearing lest silence on their part might be supposed to proceed either from a consciousness that the charges made against them were just, or a disregard to public opinion, think proper to publish the following

EXPOSITION OF THEIR OBJECTS AND THEIR MOTIVES.

AFTER a century of Pains and Penalties, in which period the most severe and minute investigation had not been able to attach on them one instance of disloyalty, the Catholics of Ireland ventured to approach the Government of their Country; and, with all humility, to hope for some relaxation of the oppressive system of laws under which they groaned. For this purpose, in 1790, a Deputation from their Body, prepared a Petition to Parliament of so modest a tenor as to ask for nothing specific, but merely that their case should be taken into consideration: With this Petition they waited on the Minister, to implore the countenance and protection of Government;—but in vain!—and not only so, but the Catholics of Ireland,

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constituting, at the lowest, three-fourths of the inhabitants of the kingdom, had not sufficient influence to induce any one Member of Parliament to bring in their Petition !

In 1791, a second Deputation of Twelve of their Body waited on the Minister, with a list of the Penal Code ; and again, without presuming to point out any specific measure, humbly submitted the whole to the wisdom and humanity of Government, to remove any part which they might think fit ; and so low was at that time the spirit—so abject the situation of the Catholics, that the smallest relaxation of their slavery would have been received and acknowledged as the greatest favour.—But it did not please the Minister to consider either their sufferings or their gratitude ; occupied in more serious concerns, he had not leisure or inclination to attend to their complaints, and Three Millions of faithful and loyal subjects were turned away from the Castle without even the ceremony of an answer !

Repelled by Government here, it was determined to try the Government of England ; and, for this purpose, one of the Catholic body was delegated, to lay before his Majesty's confidential ministers a state of the sufferings of the Catholic subjects of Ireland.

In consequence of this Delegation, a negotiation was instituted ; at the close of which it was understood—that the Catholics might hope for four objects :—Grand-Juries, County-Magistracies, High-Sheriffs, and the Bar : admission to the Right of Suffrage was also mentioned, and taken under consideration. But the enemies of their emancipation had in the mean time not been idle :—every art was used to divide and distract, and consequently to baffle, the strength and councils of the Catholics. An address was procured, signed by several respectable gentlemen, most of whom were utterly ignorant of the negotiation then going forward in England, by which the Catholic claims were submitted to the good pleasure and discretion of the Government here ; and nothing specific demanded :—equal diligence was used to shock the prejudices and alarm the fears of the Protestants of the Country, and to render them inimical to the wishes of their brethren. Wheresoever it was hoped that influence could reach, it was exerted to the utmost : an outcry was raised

raised and continued, particularly in the corporation of Dublin and one or two others of inferior note, reprobating the claims of the Catholics, and full of alarm for the safety of some undefined metaphor which was called the "*Protestant Ascendancy*." Particular pains were taken to vilify and asperse the General Committee, and to hold them up as an assembly of obscure, desperate and factious men, who designed nothing less than a total subversion of every thing established in church and state.

Under these ill-boding auspices, Parliament met in January 1792. On the first day of the Sessions, notice was given by a respectable Member, of a Bill intended to be introduced for the relief of the Catholics: and on the 4th day of February the Bill was introduced; containing four heads:—The Bar, subject to exclusion from the rank of King's counsel;—intermarriage with Protestants, subject to the disfranchisement of a Protestant husband marrying a Popish wife; and further subject to the punishment of death to any Catholic clergyman performing such ceremony, altho' by something, which scarce any deference to the wisdom or goodness of the legislature can prevent from appearing at once a contradiction and a cruelty, such marriage is declared *null and void*;—the privilege of teaching school, without obtaining a license from the ordinary; and, finally, the privilege of taking more than two apprentices. Such was the Bill substituted for that which, in all human probability, would have been obtained, but for the arts of some designing, and the credulity of some honest men; and such was the relief for which the Catholics of Ireland were ordered to be grateful—and contented.

While this Bill was in progress, the great body of Catholics, acting by their Committee, presented a Petition to Parliament; and, because it was openly said that they were proceeding on a principle of indecent menace and intimidation, and that the House was called on to assert its dignity, and to crush such audacious violence in the outset, it is necessary, for the justification of the Committee, to republish the Petition, which was as follows:

THAT

" THAT as the House has thought it expedient to direct
 " their attention to the situation of the Roman Catholics
 " of Ireland, and to a further relaxation of the Penal
 " Statutes still subsisting against them, they beg leave with
 " all humility, to come before the House with the most
 " heartfelt assurance of the wisdom and justice of Parlia-
 " ment, which is at all times desirous most graciously to
 " attend to the petitions of the people; they therefore
 " humbly presume to submit to the House their intreaty
 " that they should take into their consideration, whether
 " the removal of some of the civil incapacities under which
 " they labour, and the restoration of the Petitioners to
 " some share in the Elective Franchise, which they enjoyed
 " long after the Revolution, will not tend to strengthen the
 " Protestant state, add new vigour to industry, and afford
 " protection and happiness to the Catholics of Ireland;
 " that the petitioners refer with confidence to their conduct
 " for a century past, to prove their uniform loyalty and
 " submission to the laws; and to corroborate their solemn
 " declaration, that if they obtain from the justice and benig-
 " nity of Parliament such relaxation from certain incapa-
 " cities, and a participation in that Franchise which will
 " raise them to the rank of Freemen, their gratitude must be
 " proportioned to the benefit; and that, enjoying some share
 " in the happy Constitution of Ireland, they will exert
 " themselves with additional zeal in its conservation."

Of this petition whatever may be the faults, it can scarce-
 ly be said with truth that insolence of language is one of
 them. It is a petition so humble, that it can hardly be said
 to be a petition at all; for it asks nothing, or next to no-
 thing;—the prayer of it is, not to be restored to any right
 or possession, but merely that the House should *take into con-*
sideration whether the removal of SOME of the grievances of the
Petitioners might not be compatible with Protestant security, at the
same time that it would ensure the happiness of the Catholics of
Ireland.—Surely this is not the language of menace or inti-
 midation.

Humble however, if not abject, as this petition may be
 thought by some, it did not escape a very severe condemna-
 tion.—It was, contrary to the ordinary custom of Parlia-
 ment,

ment, and to that indulgence usually shewn to those who come humbly to supplicate their compassion, taken off the table, and, by a very large majority—*rejected*! by which the House did refuse, not to grant any relief to the petitioners, for that the petition did not venture to demand, but even to take their case into consideration. Whether regard be had to the numbers, the loyalty, the merits or the sufferings of the men who were thus driven from the door of the Legislature with so harsh a condemnation of their hopes, it may perhaps be thought, that their Petition, as well from the extreme modesty of the demand, as the, almost, servility of the language, might have been suffered to die in silence, without going thro' the ceremony of a public and ignominious execution; but this spirit of rejection was not confined to the Petition of the Catholics—it extended also to their friends;—the opulent, liberal and spirited town of Belfast had petitioned that the Catholics might be released from the restrictive statutes at present in force against them, and so be restored to the rank of Citizens:—their Petition was taken off the table, and by a specific vote *rejected* also!

During the whole progress of the bill, a line was studiously drawn, at least in argument, between those gentlemen who had addressed, and the Committee who had petitioned.—The former were denominated, the “ virtuous, and the venerable, the learned and the liberal:”—the latter were loaded with many severe epithets; and it was particularly insisted and urged, as one strong reason for the unprecedented contempt with which their petition had been rejected—that they were an obscure faction, confined merely to the Capital—disowned by the great body of the Catholics—ignorant of their sentiments, and incompetent to speak or act on their behalf.

Under these circumstances of disgrace and obloquy heaped on the Committee, the Bill was passed; and the Sessions terminated; but the Catholics were not satisfied: Their minds were roused to a due sense of their situation, and they determined to persevere. Previous, however, to making any farther application, the Committee, following the example of their brethren in England, which had been attended with such conciliatory effects, and in pursuance
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of the advice of many of their best friends and ablest supporters, resolved to give to the Legislature and their Country the fullest satisfaction in their power, on all topics of their faith; which were, however remotely, connected with the principles of good order and government.—For this purpose, they anxiously attended to every objection and every proposal, whether resulting from motives of friendship or enmity, to secure or to subvert their hopes of emancipation; they consulted those who, from their situation and pursuits, were best acquainted with the difficulties and the doubts existing in the minds of their Protestant brethren; they diligently studied for the modes most likely to give complete satisfaction on all those points; and, finally, after due and earnest deliberation, they published a Declaration which is annexed.—The measure has completely answered its purpose;—the Declaration has been signed, it may be said, **UNIVERSALLY**, by the Catholics of all descriptions through the kingdom, Clergy and Laity: It has received the warm approbation of all the supporters, and has imposed silence on many of the opponents, of Catholic Emancipation,

Having thus cleared the way in a certain degree, by the removal of prejudices so long operating in their disfavor, and so diligently propagated and continued by all who wished that Ireland should remain disunited, and consequently feeble; wishing to pay every possible respect and deference to the Legislature, which had expressed doubts as to what were the real sentiments and wishes of the Catholic Body; convinced that to induce that august Assembly to afford relief to Three Millions of loyal and peaceable subjects, they only wanted to be satisfied that it was their unanimous and earnest desire, and feeling the indispensable necessity of an organ, whereby the unequivocal sense of **ALL** the Catholics of Ireland might be fairly collected and fully expressed, the Committee devised a Plan*, whereby the sentiments of every individual of that body in Ireland should be ascertained.

Immediately on the appearance of this Plan, a general outcry was raised against it:—Sedition—Tumult—Conspiracy

* A copy of that Plan is subjoined in the Appendix.

spiracy—Treason! was echoed from county to county, and Grand-Jury to Grand-Jury;—even some of the Legislators of the land, high in the confidence of their Sovereign, and armed with all the influence of station and office, did not disdain to preside at those meetings, and stand foremost in a premature arraignment and condemnation of those merits and those claims, on which, in another place, and in another function, they were finally to determine; artfully forecasting that, at a future day, they might appear to act but in conformity and obedience to the very clamour which themselves had raised.

From the violent and outrageous intemperance of language held by some of those Grand-Juries, it might be thought that the Catholics of Ireland were on the eve of a general insurrection, ready to hurl the King from his Throne and tear the whole frame of the Constitution to pieces! The solemn tender of Lives and Fortunes, a measure that should be reserved for the last necessities of the State, for the actual invasion of a foreign enemy, or the impending ruin of a national bankruptcy, was repeated till it became ridiculous;—even the *peaceful* corporation of the Capital caught the contagious frenzy—and the Common Council of Dublin also, made a tender of their lives and their fortunes.

It is not easy to do justice to those compositions but by extracts:—The Leitrim Grand-Jury denominate the Plan “an inflammatory and dangerous publication;” and declare, “that they feel it necessary to come forward at this period to declare, that they are ready to support, with *their Lives and Fortunes*, our present most valuable constitution in Church and State; and that they will *resist to the utmost of their power*, the attempts of any body of men, however numerous, who shall presume to threaten innovation in either.” The first signature to this paper is that of a gentleman, a member of the Legislature, and possessing the very lucrative place of Collector of the Port of Dublin.

The Grand-Jury of the County of Cork denominate the Plan “An unconstitutional proceeding of the most alarming, dangerous and seditious tendency—an attempt to
“ *overawe*

" *overawe Parliament* ;" and state their determination to
 " *protect and defend with their Lives and Fortunes*" the present
 " constitution in Church and State.

The Grand-Jury of the County Roscommon, after the usual epithets of " *alarming, dangerous and seditious*," assert that the Plan " *calls upon the whole body of the* " Roman Catholics of Ireland to associate themselves in the " *metropolis of this kingdom, upon the model of the* " National Assembly of France, which has already plunged " *that devoted country into a state of anarchy and tumult,* " *unexampled in any civilized nation:*" they state it to be an " *attempt to overawe Parliament:*" they mention their " *serious* " *and sensible alarms*" for the existence of our present happy establishment in Church and State, and their determination, " *at the hazard of every thing dear to them, to uphold and maintain the Protestant interest of Ireland.*"—To these two last appears the signature of a noble Lord, who was foreman of *both* Juries.

The Grand-Jury of Sligo resolve " *That they will, at all* " *times, and by every constitutional means in their power,* " *resist and oppose every attempt now making, or hereafter to be* " *made by the Roman Catholics, to obtain the Elective* " *Franchise; or any participation in the government of the* " *country;*" and conclude with a tender of their lives and fortunes.

The Grand-Jury of Donegal declare that, tho' " *They* " *regard the Catholics with tenderness,*" they will " *maintain,* " *at the hazard of every thing dear to them, the Protestant Inte-* " *rest of Ireland.*"

The Grand-Jury of Fermanagh, professing also " *The* " *warmest attachment to their Roman Catholic brethren,*" feel it however " *necessary to come forward at this period* " *to declare—that they are ready with their lives and fortunes* " *to support our present invaluable Constitution in church* " *and state;*" in which declaration they are abetted and confirmed by the approbation of three noble Lords, expressed by their signatures to the said declaration.

The Grand-Jury of Derry, after expressing their apprehensions, lest their proceedings may lead to the formation of
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" an hierarchy, consisting partly of *laity*," which would destroy the *Protestant Ascendancy*, the *freedom* of the *Elective Franchise*, and the established constitution of this country; tender their *lives and fortunes* to support the happy constitution as established at the *revolution of 1688*; a period when, it is to be remarked, the Catholics of Ireland possessed the right of franchise, subject only to the taking a very simple oath of allegiance comprised in two lines.

Without presuming to draw any inference, the Committee beg leave here to state a plain fact:—A very great majority of the leading signatures affixed to these resolutions, are those of men either high in the government of their country, or enjoying very lucrative places under that government, or possessing extensive borough interest. The Committee will not suppose that such considerations could have any influence on the conduct of those gentlemen; or that they could possibly bring their minds to think of sacrificing the liberty of Three Millions of people to the advancement of their own private interest: be their motives what they may, the fact is as it has been now stated.

It is a much more pleasing task to the Committee to observe, with the sincerest gratitude, that many respectable Grand-Jurors had the magnanimity to reject, with scorn the idea of dooming so large a portion of their countrymen to perpetual and hopeless slavery; and disdained to become accomplices in the political destruction of the peace and happiness of Ireland.

Perhaps enough has been submitted to furnish an adequate idea of the spirit of those compositions; yet one or two remain behind, which claim peculiar notice, as well from the sentiments which they contain, as from the elevated rank of those who presided or assisted at their promulgation.

The Grand Jury of the county of Louth, with the Speaker of the House of Commons at their head, declare as follows: " That the allowing to Catholics the right of
" voting for members to serve in parliament, or admitting
" them to any participation in the government of the king-
" dom, is incompatible with the safety of the Protestant
" Establishment, the continuance of the succession to the
C " crown

“ crown in the illustrious house of Hanover; and must
 “ finally tend to shake, if not destroy, our connection with
 “ Great-Britain, on the continuance and inseparability of
 “ which depends the happiness and prosperity of this king-
 “ dom.—Resolved, that we will oppose every attempt towards
 “ such a dangerous innovation; and that we will support,
 “ with our lives and fortunes, our present constitution and
 “ the settlement of the throne in his Majesty’s Protestant
 “ house.”

To such an attack, this Committee would disdain to give an answer, were it not for the insinuation, that it is their wish to “ shake, if not destroy, our connection with Great-Britain;” and that “ the Emancipation of the Catholics is incompatible with the succession of the Crown to the illustrious House of Hanover.”

For the loyalty of the Catholics of Ireland they appeal to their uniform conduct from the Revolution to this hour, a period of 104 years; thro’ two rebellions in Great-Britain, and five foreign wars; during which time no one has ventured to impeach that conduct, until this most unjust, and unwarrantable attack.—The Catholics of Ireland are as loyal as the Grand-Jury of the county of Louth, or as the foreman of that Jury; they would perhaps be as ready to testify their loyalty, thro’ danger or thro’ death, as the loud-est of their calumniators; they have lives and fortunes to devote to the service of their king and country, but they would scorn to prostitute them to the unworthy purpose of holding their brethren in chains;—they are attached to the connection with Great-Britain, because they feel the benefits of that connection; and they furnish in consequence, their full quota to the support of the common cause: the fleets and armies of the empire are supplied by their numbers; the revenue of their country supported by their contributions.—But, if their loyalty were to be sapped, or their attachment to England perverted, what way could be devised more likely to shake the one, or eradicate the other, than a sentence like that of the Grand-Jury of Louth, which tells them at once—that Liberty to Catholics is incompatible with their loyalty to their King or their connection with Great Britain?—God forbid the question were ever to be reduced to

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the dreadful alternative of Slavery or Resistance!—the man who would present it to their option in that shape, is at once the enemy of Liberty and Loyalty—of the King and of the Catholics.

The pride and glory of the constitution of England is, that the just prerogative of the crown is perfectly compatible with the liberty of the subject. Is the power of the crown in Ireland only to be maintained by the degradation and slavery of the great body of the people?—It is not wise to drive the question to such extremity.

But the Catholics of Ireland well know the treachery which lurks beneath this false imputation on their loyalty;—they well know their attachment to the crown, as recognized by the constitution;—they know the object of their pursuit is no question between the King and the People; but between the people and the few monopolists, whose power and pre-eminence exist by *their* slavery; who wish to cover their speculation beneath the sacred shelter of the throne, and to prostitute the majesty of the royal name, by holding it forth as the signal of oppression to the subject.—The dishonest artifice will not avail—the people will separate a gracious monarch, the father of his people, from the arrogant monopolist, whose power is maintained by their depression;—they will, as they have ever done, preserve their loyalty inviolate;—but they will steadily persevere in the pursuit of their Emancipation.

The Freeholders of the county of Limerick charge the Committee with an intention to “*overawe the Legislature,*” “to FORCE a repeal of the Penal Laws, and to erect a Popish Democracy for their government and direction, in the pursuit of whatever objects may be held out to them by “*turbulent and seditious men:*” they then instruct their representatives in Parliament, AT ALL EVENTS, to oppose any proposition which may be made for extending to Catholics the Right of Elective Franchise; thereby confirming, as far as in them lies, the principle of perpetual and hopeless exclusion: and this meeting, publishing those Resolutions, is dignified by the presence of no less a personage than the LORD HIGH CHANCELLOR OF IRELAND.

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The Corporation of Dublin, in a long Manifesto, wherein they, in terms, deny the competency of Parliament to extend the Right of Franchise to Catholics, which they choose to call "alienating their most valuable inheritance," and more than insinuate their determination to resist such a measure, if attempted—roundly assert, that "the last Sessions of Parliament left the Roman Catholics in no wise different from their Protestant fellow-subjects, *save only in the exercise of political power.*" The truth or falsehood of that assertion will best appear from a short review of the actual state of that body at this day.

The Catholics of Ireland may not found nor endow any University, College or School, for the Education of their children: neither can they obtain Degrees in the University of Dublin; being prohibited by the several charters and statutes now in force therein.

The child of a Catholic, on conforming to the Protestant religion, may file a bill in chancery, grounded on the statute of the 8th Anne, Ch. 3. against the parent, and compel such parent, by the process of that court, to confess upon oath, the quantity and value of the *goods and personal chattels* of such parent, over and above debts contracted, *bond fide* for valuable consideration, before the conformity; upon this conformity the court is impowered to seize upon, and allocate for the *immediate maintenance* of such child, any sum not exceeding *one-third* of the said *goods and personal chattels*.—This *third* for *immediate maintenance*: but as to *future establishment*, upon the death of the parent, no limits whatsoever are assigned by the statute; the Chancellor may, if he thinks fit, take the whole of such property, money, stock in trade or agriculture, out of the hands of the possessor, and secure it in any manner he may think expedient for that purpose; the Act not having any sort of limit with regard to the quantity of such property which is to be so charged, nor having given any sort of direction concerning the means of charging or securing it:—But the policy of the Legislature was not exhausted.—

Because there was a possibility that the parent, tho' sworn and otherwise compellable, might, by *false representations*, evade the discovery of the ultimate value of *such property*

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on the *first* bill; *new* bills may be brought at any time, by any or by all the children for a further discovery;—such property of the parent is to undergo a fresh scrutiny; and in consequence of this scrutiny, a new distribution is to be made. The parent can have no security against the vexation of reiterated chancery suits, and continual dissection of *such* his property, but by doing what must be confessed is somewhat difficult to human feelings, by fully and without reserve abandoning *such* property, (which may be his *whole*) to be disposed of at the discretion of such a court in favour of such children.—Is this enough, and has the parent purchased his repose by the total surrender for once of *such* effects? Very far from it; the law expressly and carefully provides, that he shall not; for as in the former case, a *concealment* of any part of *such* effects is made the equitable ground of a *new* bill; so here, any *encrease* of them is made a second ground of equity; for the children are authorized, if they can find that their parent has by his industry or otherwise acquired any property since their first bill, to bring others, compelling a fresh account, and another distribution of the encreased substance, proportioned to its value at the time the new bill is preferred.—They may bring such bills *toties quoties*, upon every improvement of *such* property by the parent, without any sort of limitation of time, of the number of such bills, or the quantity of encrease in the estate which may justify the bringing them: in short, the law has provided by a multiplicity of regulations, that the parent shall have no respite from the persecution of his children, but by totally abandoning not only his present *goods and personal chattels*, but every hope of encrease and improvement of *such* property. It is very well worth remarking, that the law has purposely avoided to determine any age for those emancipating conversions; so that the children at any age, however in all other respects incapable of choice, however immature or even infantine, are yet considered as sufficiently capable of disinheriting their parents, if the expression may be allowed, and of subtracting themselves from their direction and controul:—by this part of the law the value of Catholics in their *goods and personal chattels* is rendered extremely limited, and altogether precarious; the paternal authority

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in such families undermined ; and love and gratitude, dependence and protection, almost extinguished.

Catholics, as non-freemen, are excluded from all municipal stations, and are further liable to divers taxes and imposts, in all guilds and corporate towns; which gives an undue preference to those who are exempt therefrom, injuring the fair competition of trade, creating a distinction uniformly operating to the disfavor of the Catholics, and thereby preventing their being able to meet their Protestant brethren in business, on a footing of equality.

It is unlawful for Catholics not only to carry, but to have in their possession, arms for the defence of their families, properties and persons; whereby they are exposed, unprotected, to all manner of violence;—and this most unjust prohibition is enforced by means still more unjust and unconstitutional, whereby severe penalties without any regard to proportion are inflicted; new modes of inquisition are enjoined; the largest powers are vested in the lowest magistrates; any justice of the peace, or any magistrate of a city or town corporate, with or *without* information, by themselves or by their warrant, at their discretion, whenever they think proper, at any hour of the day or *night*, are empowered *forceably* to enter, and to search the house of any Catholic, or of any *Protestant* whom they *suspect* to keep arms in trust for a Catholic. This they may do at their discretion; and it seems a *pretty ample* power to be vested in the hands of that class of magistrates.

Besides the discretionary and occasional search, the law has prescribed one that is general and periodical. It is to be made annually, under the warrants of justices of peace and magistrates of corporations, by the high and petty constables, or any others whom they choose to authorize, with all the powers, and with the same circumstances in every respect which attend the discretionary and occasional search.

Not trusting, however, to the activity of the magistrates proceeding officially, the law has invited voluntary informers, by the distribution of considerable rewards, and even pressed involuntary informers into the service, by the dread

dread of very heavy penalties.—With regard to the latter method, justices of the peace and magistrates of corporations are empowered to summon before them any person whatsoever, and to tender to him an oath, by which they oblige him to discover concerning all persons, without distinction of propinquity or connection, who have any arms concealed contrary to law, and even whether he himself has any.—His refusal to appear, or appearing his refusal to discover and inform, subjects him to *fine and imprisonment*, or such *corporal punishment of pillory or whipping*, as the Court shall in its *discretion* think proper. Thus all persons, Peers and Peereses, Protestants as well as Catholics may be summoned, to perform this *honorable* service, by the bailiff of a corporation of a few straggling cottages, and refusing to perform it, are liable to be fined and imprisoned, pilloried, or whipt!—The punishment for the first offence in *Peers and Peereses*, if not pilloried or whipt, is 300*l.* and for the second offence, the punishment is no less than the penalties of a person attainted in a *Præmunire*; that is, that the offender shall be out of the King's protection; and his or her lands and tenements, goods and chattels forfeited to the King; and his or her body shall remain in prison, at the King's pleasure. The punishment for the offence in *persons of an inferior order*, if not pilloried or whipt, is (without any consideration of what their substance may be) 50*l.* and one year's imprisonment; and for the second offence they are subject to the penalties of a person attainted of a *Præmunire*.

Catholics may not hold nor enjoy any place, office of trust or emolument whatsoever, civil or military, even to the lowest; by which universal proscription all persons of a liberal condition amongst them are ignominiously degraded, and precluded from devoting their talents or their lives to the service and protection of their King and country. A Catholic gentleman is as much excluded from bearing the colours of a regiment, as from the station of Captain-General of all his Majesty's armies; and is no more qualified to be a Gunner's-mate than to be Lord High-Admiral of England; and this exclusion is the more severely felt by them, because the ranks of the army are filled, and the navy in a manner supplied, by their numbers; who, partaking in all that is painful, laborious and dangerous,

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are shut out from any thing that is lucrative, splendid or honorable: and in the civil department this exclusion is equally unjust; inasmuch as the Catholics contribute largely to the revenue and support of his Majesty's government in Ireland; no portion of which contribution ever returns to them: wherein they very materially differ from, and are inferior to, their Protestant brethren; who, in contributing to the exigencies of the state, are reimbursed thro' a thousand channels, by the variety of lucrative offices and appointments in the various civil departments, distributed solely amongst them, and to the utter exclusion of the Catholics, from whom wealth flows to the government in a perpetual stream, never to return!—And this monopolizing spirit of exclusion depresses the genius and talents, and degrades the mind of the nation, by entirely suppressing all honorable emulation, and extinguishing in the breasts of three millions of people every hope of advancement to honour or fortune, through any degree of merit or endowment.

Catholics may not serve, on any Jury in a civil action where one of the parties is a Protestant; contrary to the spirit of the laws of England, which exceed all others in the precautions which they take against judicial partiality, manifested by the wise and equitable regulations which they ordain to secure, as far as human wisdom can, the most perfect indifference between the parties, and to remove the possibility of a bias operating to the injury of either.

Catholics may not serve on any jury in trials by information or indictment, grounded on any of the penal statutes; contrary to the known humanity of the law, which respects even the prejudices of a culprit, in the choice of the men who are to sit in judgment upon him. In all criminal cases the exactest sympathy in rank, condition, and even the relation of vicinage with the party accused, is as far as possible preserved. Foreigners may demand of right, that half their jury shall be foreigners—not so the Catholics of Ireland—the same law which made them aliens in their native land deprived them of the privileges of aliens.

Catholics are excluded from serving on Grand-Juries, whereby they are in a great degree deprived of the grand palladium
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of the constitution—trial by their peers; not to mention the injustice of their property being taxed by a body, of which the law has taken care that they shall never form a part. This exclusion the Catholics particularly feel as a grievance; and their anxiety will not, perhaps, be thought unreasonable by any who shall consider the spirit of the Resolutions put forth by the late Grand-Juries of Ireland, and referred to in this publication. Without appearing to feel an unmanly anxiety for either life or property, the Catholics of Ireland may be allowed to apprehend a possibility of danger to both, from the unqualified and unrestrained exertion of judicial authority, by men who in the very outset display a spirit of such determined animosity.

But there remains one disqualification yet unmentioned, which the Catholics of Ireland feel more severely than all others; they are excluded from the Elective Franchise, to the manifest perversion of the spirit of the Constitution; which says, that no man shall be taxed where he is not represented actually or virtually; nor bound by laws to which he has not assented by himself or his representative; and this unjust exclusion is not merely the violation of a theory, but an actual and substantial grievance: for, tho' not to have the right of voting excites in itself no degree of horror; yet in this country, in a thousand instances, when combined with its attendant circumstances, it implies distress, ejection, nakedness, cold and hunger. In every county where electioneering contests recur, it continually happens, that Catholic tenants are, at the expiration of their leases, expelled and thrown upon the world with their miserable families, to make room for Protestant freeholders, whose votes may support the consequence of their landlords; unless, when the unhappy wretches, balancing between spiritual danger and temporal destruction, prefer perjury to famine, and take oaths which they do not believe; a violation of moral principle, which tends to bring equal scandal on the religion which they quit, and that which they seem to adopt; and by loosing the sacred obligation of an oath, opens a wide inlet to a thousand enormities.

And, independent of the moral turpitude induced by those occasional conformities, which disgrace the return of every

general election, the agricultural improvement of the country is very materially impeded by this uncertainty of possession to Catholics, who are thereby prevented from cultivating or improving their farms, to the extent they otherwise might and would. And further, in every department wherein favour or preference can be shewn, as in presentments for roads, and a variety of other modes, they find the want of that protection which a vote gives to him who possesses it; so that, in many essential points, the most respectable Catholic can scarcely be said to be on an equal footing with the most obscure Protestant forty-shilling freeholder. And further, the administration of justice in a variety of subordinate cases (which tho' too minute to enter superior courts, are yet of infinite importance to the poor, the great majority of the nation) is exposed to a bias, which must have some influence on the purest minds; for in a country like Ireland, wherein election interest is an object so earnestly sought after, and so diligently cultivated, an uniformly impartial distribution of justice between two parties, one possessing the whole franchise, from which the other is totally excluded, is a circumstance rather to be hoped than expected: it is a temptation to petty injustice, to which a good man should not be exposed, and with which a bad man should not be entrusted.

Such is the situation of Three Millions of good and faithful subjects in their native land; excluded from every trust, power or emolument of the state, civil or military; excluded from all the benefits of the constitution in all its parts; excluded from all corporate rights and immunities; repelled from Grand-Juries; restrained in Petit-Juries; excluded from every direction, from every trust, from every incorporated society, from every establishment, occasional or fixed, instituted for public defence, public police, public morals or public convenience; from the Bench, from the Bank, from the Exchange, from the University, from the College of Physicians:—from what are they not excluded?

There is no institution which the wit of man has invented, or the progress of society produced, which private charity or public munificence has founded for the advancement of education, learning and good arts, for the permanent relief of
age,

age, infirmity or misfortune—from the superintendence of which, and, in all cases where common charity would permit, from the enjoyment of which, the legislature has not taken care to exclude the Catholics of Ireland.

Such is the state which the Corporation of Dublin have thought proper to assert “differs in no respect from that of the Protestants, save only in the exercise of political power;”—and the host of Grand-Juries consider as essential to the existence of the constitution, to the permanency of the connexion with England, and the continuation of the throne in his Majesty’s Royal house;—a greater libel on the constitution, the connexion, or the succession could not be pronounced; nor one more pregnant with dangerous and destructive consequences, than this, which asserts that they are only to be maintained and continued by the slavery and oppression of three millions of good and loyal subjects.

It is the duty of the General Committee to reply to those of the objections made against their present Proceedings, which appear to have any weight. In the first place, it is asserted, that they are “A Popish congress, formed for the purpose of overawing the legislature.” Without descending to observe on the invidious appellation of “*a Popish congress*,” they consider the intention to overawe Parliament as the substantial part of the charge; against the truth of this accusation they do most solemnly protest:—They utterly abjure, disclaim and renounce the holding such an intention; and they call upon their enemies to point out the word, action or publication of the Catholics of Ireland, which can, before rational and dispassionate minds, be construed to bear such an absurd and wicked import;—if none such can be shewn, if the conduct of the Catholics for a century past has been uniformly peaceable, dutiful and submissive, they trust their views and motives will be fairly judged on their own merits, and not on forced constructions, unwarranted by the actions, and thus solemnly again disclaimed as the intentions of the Committee.

They are charged with exciting discontent, tumult, and sedition. After the enumeration of Grievances under which the Catholics of Ireland labour, it is attributing too much to this Committee to say, that they are the cause of the
present

present discontents. As to tumult and sedition, they challenge those who make the assertion to shew the instance.—Where have there been riots, or tumults, or seditions, which can in the most remote degree be traced to the proceedings or publications of this Committee? They know too well how fatal to their hopes of emancipation any thing like disturbance must be; independent of the danger to those hopes, it is more peculiarly their interest to preserve peace and good order than that of any body of men in the community.—They have a large stake in the country, much of it vested in that kind of property which is most peculiarly exposed to danger from popular tumult:—**THE GENERAL COMMITTEE WOULD SUFFER MORE BY ONE WEEK'S DISTURBANCE, THAN ALL THE MEMBERS OF THE TWO HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.**

But the most complete refutation of this unjust charge, is the very measure which is made the pretence for bringing it forward. When the humble petition, already recited, was in the last session presented to Parliament, it was rejected with circumstances of peculiar disgrace and ignominy; and as one reason for that rejection, it was insisted—that the petitioners did not speak the sense of the Catholic body. It therefore became necessary to ascertain what the sense of that body was; and the Committee submit whether a plan for collecting the general sentiment could be devised, more quiet, peaceable, orderly and efficacious, than summoning from each county and city of Ireland, the most respectable and intelligent gentlemen; who, from their situation and connexions, best know the wishes of their countrymen; and from their property must be most desirous, and most capable of securing tranquility and good order? But in a case like the present, there is no argument so powerful as the fact:—The choice of the Catholics *has been universally made, without a single instance of irregularity or disorder*:—There is more riot and disturbance in one day, at a contested election for a common potwalloping borough, than occurred in choosing Delegates to this Committee from the thirty-two counties, and every great city in the kingdom.

With regard to the apprehensions which are affected to be felt for the succession to the throne in his Majesty's Royal house,

house, should the Catholics be restored to the Right of Franchise, it is too absurd to deserve any answer. The loyalty of this nation is well known; they rest on that approved character, and on the oath of allegiance universally taken by their body. If they held that obligation light, they need not now come, humbly suing for what they might demand as their right.—The wisdom of their enemies has been able to devise no means more efficacious than an oath, to exclude them from the blessings of the constitution.

It is said that the Plan for the formation of this Committee is unconstitutional. Before that assertion be received, let the situation of the Catholics of Ireland be considered; Groaning under the weight of a most severe and oppressive code, an universal system of pains and penalties, they yet possessed one privilege, which, in the general wreck and carnage of their rights, had fortunately escaped the sagacious and malignant vengeance of their persecutors:—They retained the Right to Petition.—But three millions of sufferers cannot, and, if they could, ought not to meet for the purpose of stating their grievances and suing for redress.—They must therefore, either acquiesce without effort, or act by delegation, a mode not forbidden to any of his majesty's subjects; and more emphatically allowable to the Catholics, inasmuch as they have no representatives in Parliament, to whom they may apply. If this mode be forbidden them, they have no other whereby they can act with effect; and the obvious and certain consequence is, that they are, in fact, debarred from the common birthright of every subject—the great, unalienable, indefeasible privilege—
THE RIGHT TO PETITION THE LEGISLATURE FOR REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES. Let it be determined who act most unconstitutionally:—Those who, selecting the discreetest members of their body, come humbly before the Throne and before Parliament, submitting their sufferings, and supplicating relief; or those who attempt to step in between the crown and the subject, the legislature and the people, and erecting themselves into a kind of fourth estate, labour, as far as in them lies, to abrogate and destroy that sacred privilege, inherent in the vitals of the constitution—**THE RIGHT TO PETITION.**

It is asserted that the restoration of the Right of Franchise would throw into the hands of the Catholics the whole
 power

power of the state. Let it be remembered that the Crown is unalterably Protestant—that the Catholics in the House of Peers are so few in number, that danger from them is not to be apprehended; and that number can only be augmented at the will of the Crown—that the number of Catholics, who can at first have influence on the popular branch, must be extremely small; that the increase to that number must principally accrue thro' the favour of Protestants, in whose hands a great proportion of the landed property, and all the boroughs and corporations, are deposited;—that the whole patronage of the church, the law, the army, the revenue, thro' all their departments, are at the disposal of the government of this country, which is Protestant;—that this gradual and slow progress must wear away those relicks of distinctions, and dregs of animosities, which yet remain, and which are fostered and cherished by the spirit of monopoly on the one hand, and the sense of depression on the other;—that it is the continuance of those unjust exclusions which alone prevents the Protestants and Catholics of Ireland from becoming one people in sentiment and in interest:—To all this, let there be added, the certainty of the immediate interference of England, so powerful and so near, should the Catholics attempt to assume, as is asserted—“ the whole power of the state.”

But the great test, experience, is the best proof of the futility of such apprehension. The Catholics of Ireland were once in full possession of all privileges and franchises, including those of sitting and voting in Parliament; their numbers were then much greater, comparatively, than they now are; they possessed a very large proportion of the property of this country at that time, unbroken in upon by the force of penal laws, by the conformity of many of their ancient families, and by the legalized plunder of reiterated Bills of Discovery. In that situation, in the plenitude of their power, they were unable to prevent the passing of those very penal laws which have gradually deprived them of their property, of their civil rights, and more particularly of the Elective Franchise. Is it then likely, is it possible, that the restoration of those rights would enable them, in their weakness and depression, to extort, what, in the
vigour,

vigour and full possession, they found themselves unable to retain?

But it is said, that that the Catholics should be "content with the most perfect toleration of their religion, the fullest security of their property and the most complete personal liberty."—With regard to toleration, persecution may be negative as well as positive.—The deprivation of political rights, because of the exercise of any religion, is, for so much, a persecution of that religion. For the security of their property, enough has been already said, to explain how Catholics stand in that respect; but if it were otherwise, security of property and personal liberty are rights, without a respect to which, society could not be supported.—Protection and allegiance are duties corresponding and inseparable. By their peaceable demeanour, as good subjects, the Catholics have executed their part of the contract; and that Government, to whose support they contribute, *is bound*, in return, to defend them. And it is humbly submitted, whether it be not a strong and striking proof of the abject state of the Catholics of Ireland, that it should be held out to them, as ground for acquiescence and contentment, that they cannot be robbed without redress, or imprisoned with impunity! Or, in other words, that, without any alledged delinquency on their part, they are not treated as outlaws in their native land! Even the security and toleration which it is alledged they possess, they hold but by sufferance; for unconnected as the Catholics are with the Legislature, they can have no influence: and it is again submitted to the feelings of our Protestant brethren, whether *they* would be content to hold their religion, liberty and property by so precarious a tenure, as the humanity of men who owed them no responsibility, over whose conduct they had no controul, and whose interests, or whose passions might be gratified by an invasion of their dearest rights?

The Committee have hitherto confined themselves to the abstract merits of their case: but they have other arguments to alledge.—By the treaty of Limerick, in 1691, at least a very considerable part of the Catholics of Ireland, on condition of their surrendering to the Generals of King William,

William, that city, and above one-third of this kingdom, then in their hands, and which they were in a condition well to have maintained, were secured in "all and every" "their estates of freehold and inheritance; and all the" "rights, titles, interests, privileges and immunities, which" "they and every or any of them held, enjoyed, or were" "rightfully and lawfully intitled to in the reign of King" "Charles II. or at any time since."—And this treaty was confirmed with as much solemnity as any in the records of History, by the Lords Justices of Ireland, by King William and Queen Mary, and finally by Parliament; whereby the public faith was pledged in the strongest and most binding manner; yet, notwithstanding this solemn and sacred obligation, a multiplicity of cruel, unjust and tyrannical laws have from time to time been enacted, many of which are still in full force and vigour, abolishing and restraining the rights and privileges of all Catholics, indiscriminately and without distinction; and more particularly depriving them of the Elective Franchise. And this glaring infraction of the law of nations, and of the first principles of natural justice, a violation which should call down the vengeance of Heaven on the heads of those who were guilty thereof, was perpetrated in an hour of full and perfect security, as an act of wanton power, and without any delinquency, alledged or proved, on the part of the Catholics, to afford a pretext for so infamous and notorious a dereliction of every thing like public principle or national honor. And the Committee are well warranted in asserting this; inasmuch as the Catholics have, in the surrender of Limerick and their arms, and by their peaceable and dutiful deportment as good and loyal subjects, from that hour to the present, faithfully and religiously observed on their part, a treaty so solemnly entered into; and so speedily and so unprovokedly violated on the part of their adversaries.

And now that the General Committee have fairly and fully exposed the Conduct, the Motives and the Principles of the Catholics of Ireland: They conclude with a most sincere and earnest entreaty to every member of their communion, carefully to abstain from any act, which however remotely, can tend to riot or disorder.—

After

After a century of unvarying good conduct, thro' the most severe oppression, the Committee relies, that the Catholics will not now tarnish their character by any act of intemperance, when the hour of emancipation rapidly approaches.—Professing their sincere attachment to the constitution, as established in the three estates, King, Lords, and Commons; into which Constitution it is their highest ambition to be admitted; the Cause of the Catholics is respectfully committed to the justice, humanity and public spirit of their Countrymen.

Signed by Order of the General Committee,

EDWARD SHEIL,
CHAIRMAN,

RICHARD M'CORMICK,
SECRETARY.

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THE
DECLARATION

Adopted by the General Committee, March the 17th, 1792.

AND

SUBSCRIBED BY THE CATHOLICS OF IRELAND.

WHEREAS certain opinions and principles, inimical to good order and government, have been attributed to the Catholics, the existence of which we utterly deny; and, whereas, it is at this time peculiarly necessary to renounce such imputations, and to give the most full, and ample satisfaction to our Protestant brethren, that WE HOLD NO PRINCIPLE, WHATSOEVER, INCOMPATIBLE WITH OUR DUTY AS MEN OR AS SUBJECTS, OR REPUGNANT TO LIBERTY, WHETHER POLITICAL, CIVIL, OR RELIGIOUS.

Now, We, the Catholics of Ireland, for the removal of all such imputations, and in deference to the opinion of many respectable bodies of men, and individuals, among our Protestant brethren, do hereby, in the face of our Country, of all Europe, and before God, make this our deliberate and solemn Declaration.

I. WE ABJURE, DISAVOW, AND CONDEMN the opinion, that Princes, excommunicated by the Pope and Council, or by any ecclesiastical authority whatsoever, may therefore be deposed or murdered by their subjects, or any other persons. We hold such doctrine in detestation, as wicked and impious; and we declare we do not believe, that either the
Pope,

Pope, with or without a general Council, or any *Prelate or Priest, or any ecclesiastical power whatsoever*, can absolve the subjects of this kingdom, or any of them, from their allegiance to his Majesty King George the Third, who is, by authority of Parliament, the lawful King of this Realm.

II. WE ABJURE, CONDEMN, AND DETEST, as unchristian and impious, the principle, that it is lawful to murder, destroy, or any ways injure any person whatsoever, for or under the pretence of their being hereticks ;—and WE DECLARE SOLEMNLY before God, that we believe that *no act, in itself unjust, immoral, or wicked, can ever be justified or excused by, or under pretence or colour, that it was done either for the good of the church, or in obedience to any ecclesiastical power whatsoever.*

III. We further DECLARE, that we hold it as an unchristian and impious principle, that “ no Faith is to be kept with Hereticks.” This doctrine we detest and reprobate, not only as *contrary* to our religion, but as destructive of morality, of society, and even of common honesty ; and it is our firm belief, that an oath made to *any* person, not of the Catholic religion, is equally binding, as if it were made to any Catholic whatsoever.

IV. We have been charged with holding as an Article of our Belief, that the Pope, with or without the authority of a general Council, or that certain ecclesiastical powers, can acquit and absolve us, before God, from our Oath of Allegiance, or even from the just Oaths and Contracts entered into between man and man :

Now, WE DO UTTERLY RENOUNCE, ABJURE AND DENY that we hold or maintain any such belief, as being contrary to the peace and happiness of society, inconsistent with morality, and above all, *repugnant to the true spirit of the Catholic religion.*

V. We do further DECLARE, that we do not believe that the Pope of Rome, or any other foreign Prince, Prelate, State, or Potentate, hath, or ought to have any temporal or civil Jurisdiction, Power, Superiority, or Pre-eminence, directly or indirectly, within this Realm.

VI. After

VI. After what we have renounced, it is immaterial, in a political light, what may be our Opinion or Faith in other points respecting the Pope :—However, for greater satisfaction, WE DECLARE, that it is *not* an Article of the Catholic Faith, neither are we thereby required to believe or profess “ that the Pope is infallible,” or that we are bound to obey any order, in its own nature immoral, though the Pope, or any Ecclesiastical Power, should issue or direct such order ; but *on the contrary*, we hold, that it would be *sinful* in us to pay any respect or obedience thereto.

VII. We further DECLARE, that we do not believe that any sin whatsoever, committed by us, can be forgiven at the mere will of any Pope, or of any Priest, or of any person or persons whatsoever ; but, that *sincere sorrow for past sins*, a firm and sincere resolution, as far as may be in our power, to restore our neighbour’s property or character, if we have trespassed on, or unjustly injured either ; a *firm and sincere resolution to avoid future guilt*, and to atone to God, are *previous and indispensable* requisites to establish a well-founded expectation of forgiveness ; and that any person who receives absolution without these previous requisites, so far from obtaining thereby any remission of his sins, incurs the additional guilt of violating a Sacrament.

VIII. We do hereby SOLEMNLY DISCLAIM, and for EVER RENOUNCE, all INTEREST in, and TITLE to, all FORFEITED LANDS, resulting from any rights, or supposed rights, of our ancestors, or any CLAIM, TITLE, OR INTEREST therein ; nor do we admit any title, as a foundation of right, which is *not established and acknowledged by the laws of the realm, as they now stand*. We desire, further, that whenever the patriotism, liberality, and justice of our countrymen, shall restore to us a participation in the Elective Franchise, no Catholic shall be permitted to vote at any election for members to serve in Parliament, unless he shall previously take an oath *to defend, to the utmost of his power, the arrangement of property in this country, as established by the different acts of Attainder and Settlement*.

IX. It has been objected to us, that we wish to subvert the present Church establishment, for the purpose of substituting a Catholic establishment in its stead: Now, we do hereby, **DISCLAIM, DISAVOW, and SOLEMNLY ABJURE** any such intention; and further, if we shall be admitted into any share of the Constitution, by our being restored to the right of Elective Franchise, we are ready, in the most solemn manner, to declare, that **WE WILL NOT EXERCISE** that privilege to disturb and weaken the establishment of the **PROTESTANT RELIGION, OR PROTESTANT GOVERNMENT** IN THIS COUNTRY.

Signed by Order, and on Behalf of the General
Committee of the Catholics of Ireland,

EDWARD BYRNE,
CHAIRMAN.

RICHARD M'CORMICK,
SECRETARY.

THE

THE LETTER,

SAID TO BE SIGNED—"EDWARD BYRNE:"

AND

THE PLAN

ALLUDED TO BY THE CORPORATION OF DUBLIN,
THE GRAND-JURIES, &c.

At a Meeting of the Sub-Committee of the Catholics of
Ireland, EDWARD BYRNE, Esq. in the Chair,

RESOLVED that the following LETTER be circulated.

SIR,

THIS Letter, with the Plan which accompanies it, is transmitted to You, by order of the Sub-Committee. You will perceive that the object of this Plan is to procure a fuller attendance of country gentlemen, to assist, by their advice and influence, the measures adopted by the Committee to procure for the Catholics the **ELECTIVE FRANCHISE**, and an equal participation in the benefits of the **TRIAL BY JURY**. You will please to lose no time in submitting this to the respectable Catholics of your county; You will please also to inform them, that several respectable independent country gentlemen, lately in Dublin, had frequent consultations, for the laudable purpose of re-uniting to the Committee Lord Fingal,

Fingal, and the other gentlemen who had withdrawn themselves from it. These country gentlemen had the satisfaction to find, that the General Committee on one side, and the gentlemen who had entered into separate addresses on the other, mutually regretted their division ; which, they saw, was used by the opponents of the Catholics, as a pretext for withholding from our people the Elective Franchise, and an equal participation in the benefits of the Trial by Jury. It is on all sides agreed, that if the Catholics are ALL united in this just and reasonable request, essential to the very existence of our people—there will be a certainty of success. It depends then on ourselves, whether we shall be freemen—or slaves ! We say, essential to the very existence of our people ; for, as the rage for electioneering interests increases, our wealthy farmers must either pay beyond the value for lands, or resign them to Protestant freeholders when out of lease ; our poorer yeomanry will of course be expelled, and driven into beggary. Let us all then, speak with one voice, and supplicate the Legislature for justice—and we shall receive it.

These independent country gentlemen have received from Lord Fingal, and the gentlemen who have acted with him, the most positive declarations—that they will never again enter into any act to oppose the General Committee in their endeavours to obtain the emancipation of the Catholics ; and it is determined—that all former differences in opinion shall be buried in oblivion on both sides.

The Committee had decided to send some of their body, to propose to the counties to appoint Delegates to the Committee, of whose attendance there would be a certainty ; and our Chairman had actually left Dublin, with intention to go through great part of Ireland for this purpose ; the independent country gentlemen, as before mentioned, took up the same idea themselves, (before they knew the Committee had determined upon it) and they, and Lord Fingal and his friends, all agreed in pressing such a measure on the Committee, as an additional means of re-uniting them to the body.

Lord

Lord Fingal, his friends, and the country gentlemen before mentioned, seemed at first inclined, that the present Committee should be dissolved; an opinion, however, which further reflection on the various difficulties resulting from such a measure, the doubts entertained of the competency in the Committee to dissolve itself, and the consideration that a dissolution must necessarily occur early in 1793, induced them to forego.

The Plan inclosed, sanctioned by the General Committee, by these independent gentlemen, and by Lord Fingal and his friends, is recommended to your zeal to have carried into immediate execution in your county.

Signed by Order,

RICHARD M'CORMICK,

SECRETARY.

ON THE MANNER OF CONDUCTING THE ELECTION OF DELEGATES.

IT will be of great importance, in the present state of our affairs, that the Delegates be chosen in such a manner as to make it appear evident, that the nomination of such delegates is authorised by *all the People*. But as it might be imprudent to call a meeting of all the Catholics of a county, for the purpose of proceeding to such an election, it is therefore suggested—that one or two of the most respectable persons in each parish be appointed electors, at a meeting to be held at such *private house* in the parish, as may

F

be

be most convenient to the inhabitants. These several electors, so appointed, may meet at any central place, for the purpose of choosing from one to four (as it may appear most expedient to them) of their own residents, as Delegates to the General Committee; no one to be eligible who shall not solemnly promise to attend his duty in Dublin, when required to do so by order of the Committee, or at least who shall not pledge himself to attend in his turn. It is also suggested that, in addition to the **RESIDENT** Delegates, each county do appoint at the same time, as associate Delegates for such county, one or two (as it may appear best to the electors) **RESIDENT** inhabitants of Dublin, whose business it shall be, to keep up a regular correspondence with their colleagues in the country, and to inform the county through them, of all proceedings in the General Committee, at such times as the county Delegates shall be absent. It is to be understood that attendance on the part of the county Delegates will not be required, except on important occasions. In this, however, they are to study their own convenience; if they all come often, we are persuaded that the Committee will derive satisfaction and profit from their presence and advice.

As soon as the gentlemen of your county shall have appointed Delegates, it will be necessary to call **THEIR** attention to the first great business which shall probably engage the General Committee, viz. An humble application to our Gracious Sovereign, submitting to him our loyalty and attachment, our obedience to the laws, a true statement of our situation, and of the laws which operate against us; and humbly beseeching—that we may be restored the **ELECTIVE FRANCHISE**, and an equal participation in the benefits of the **TRIAL BY JURY**. We have the **FIRST AUTHORITY** for asserting that this application, will have infinite weight with our Gracious Sovereign and with Parliament, if our friends are qualified to declare, that it is the universal wish of **EVERY** Catholic in the Nation. To enable therefore your Delegates and the General Committee to succeed in your behalf, it will be necessary
that

that the Meeting enter into Resolutions in any words they choose to the following effect :

*At a meeting of the Catholics of the County of
regularly convened, this Day of 1792,
in the Chair :*

RESOLVED That of this County, and
of the City of Dublin, have been this Day chosen by the Catholics
of this County as their Delegates to the General Committee.

RESOLVED,

*That it is our instruction to our said Delegates, to support in
said Committee, as the voice of all the Catholics of this county,
that an humble representation be made to our Gracious Sovereign,
and to Parliament, of the many severe laws which oppress his
Majesty's faithful subjects, the Catholics of Ireland, although no
cause, founded in wisdom or policy, is assigned for their conti-
nuance ; imploring it, as essential to our protection, and to secure
an impartial distribution of justice in our favour, that we be
restored to the **ELECTIVE FRANCHISE**, and an equal
participation in the benefits of the **TRIAL BY JURY**.*

According to its present form of constitution, the General Committee is open not only to persons delegated by others, but to every Roman Catholic of landed property in the kingdom. From this mixture of **REPRESENTATIVE** and **PERSONAL** association, inconveniencies which every one may remember, but which at present it is useless to dwell on, have arisen. To guard against similar inconveniencies in future, we have recommended to your consideration the above sketch of a new system ; the object of which is to give to the Committee somewhat more of a **REPRESENTATIVE**, and somewhat less of an **INDIVIDUAL** capacity ; and we beg leave to offer you the following observations in support of our plan ;—

Men

Men appointed by others must hold themselves accountable to those from whom they derive their trust; and therefore must regulate their conduct by the standard of general opinion; or, if they be unwilling to take such a standard for their rule, and to obey the instructions of their constituents, they may be removed from the places they hold, to make room for others more practicable, and less inclined to set the dictates of private sentiment, or private interest, in opposition to the general will, and the public good.— Under a system which is thus REPRESENTATIVE, and where the trust is revocable at pleasure, SEDUCTION cannot be practised, nor can DIVISION again take place; or at least the remedy is so near the evil, that little danger is to be apprehended from either.

Our plan, by making attendance a duty, will, we apprehend, serve to bring a greater number of Country Gentlemen into the Committee than have formerly appeared among us. While admission remains so easy as it does at present, and while so many persons are exempted from responsibility and controul, we have little reason to expect that country gentlemen will desert their homes and their immediate concerns to promote an interest which is remotely or obscurely felt; but we hope that the honourable distinction of representing others, added to the obligation of a solemn promise, will not fail to reconcile those who shall happen to be delegated, to admit of some temporary hardships, in order to promote the public good. By collecting occasionally a number of Country Gentlemen in Dublin, we flatter ourselves, that the Committee will be enabled to speak the sentiments of its constituent members with distinctness and precision; and that the country parts of the kingdom will be provided with the surest means of acquiring whatever information may be necessary on the subject of Catholic affairs. From this prompt communication of opinion and intelligence, we foresee great advantages; advantages which under the present system are wholly beyond our reach; as the landed gentlemen are responsible only to themselves, and as the Dublin Delegates have frequently little knowledge of their constituents. The attendance of a greater number of
country

country gentlemen will justify such a reduction of the number of Delegates for the metropolis in the General Committee, as may be judged advisable ; a measure which was always desirable, but which could not be heretofore accomplished, as the attendance of landed gentlemen was so uncertain and irregular.

Every endeavour should be used to cultivate and improve the friendship of our clergy. The clergy and laity, having but one interest, should have but one mind, and should therefore mutually combine their talents, their opinions and their exertions, in order to effectuate our common emancipation. This union of sentiment and design, this interchange of counsel, and of aid, will serve to strengthen the bonds of a common friendship, and will be the best security against innovation in matters which relate to religion.

The clergy being the natural guardians of morality, will undoubtedly consent to co-operate with the laity, when they consider that the restoration of the Elective Franchise to the Catholic community will tend to prevent those perjuries which are so common at, and which disgrace the return of electioneering contests. By such conduct, will the clergy secure to themselves that influence over the laity of their own persuasion, which it is useful that good clergy should have ; and that respectability among persons of other persuasions, which must naturally result from the increased importance of the people to whom they belong. It is unnecessary to point out the advantages which a restoration of the Elective Franchise would produce in our habits and modes of life, in the state of national as well as individual happiness. Let it suffice to say, that not only laymen, but every Catholic bishop and priest, would, by the acquisition of so valuable a privilege to the Catholic body at large, find his condition meliorated in a variety of shapes and circumstances, which cannot easily be reduced within the compass of exact calculation. The silent operation of this right would, in the lapse of time, contribute to raise a respectable yeomanry in the kingdom ; and this yeomanry, giving on the one hand a new infusion of
vigour

vigour to the commonwealth, would, on the other supply a fund, from which the clergy would derive the means of a more honourable support, and more proportionate to their uncommon labours and merits, than at present they enjoy.

When this plan shall have been adopted, and the returns in consequence made, the Committee will in the course of next Winter, consider, as a measure of the last importance, what further improvements may be necessary in the mode of electing Delegates on future occasions; in order to secure a permanent, extensive, and effectual method of collecting the general sense of the Catholics of Ireland.

We beg leave again to recommend it you most earnestly, to carry the above Plan into IMMEDIATE execution. It is of the utmost consequence, that we should have this addition of Country Gentlemen as SOON as POSSIBLE, in order to give due weight and efficacy to our humble application to the Throne, which we are ADVISED to make this Summer, before the Parliamentary arrangements are formed for the ensuing Winter.

As soon as your Delegates shall have been chosen, we request that you will make a return of their names and address to our Secretary, *Mr. Richard McCormick, Mark's-Alley, Dublin.*

